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Jewel Cave National Monument News Release

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For Immediate Release

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Jewel Cave National Monument Gears Up for School Programs

Jewel Cave National Monument is excited to announce that it is currently taking reservations for on-site and off-site school programs. The Monument has traditionally focused on field trips that include the ever-popular Scenic Tour; however, the current direction includes on-site guided nature hikes, classroom presentations, and all-day field trips that include surface and sub-surface educational experiences.

Interested teachers and educators that wish to apply for an Academic Fee Waiver are welcome to visit the Monument online and select the For Teachers link. The requirements and guidelines for an on-site visit are listed for planning purposes. Due to limited staff and cave tour times in the spring season, teachers are encouraged to make reservations in January and February. Cave tours for school groups are made available on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays of each week through May 13. Reservations are taken on a first come first serve basis.

The Monument is also planning off-site school visits through early May. Interested teachers and educators have the opportunity to have their students work directly with a park ranger in the classroom. Program topics currently include geology, rocks and minerals, animal tracks, wildlife furs, wildlife skulls, and bats. Programs are conducted on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays through April 29. Reservations are taken on a first come first serve basis.

Superintendent Todd Suess states, "Jewel Cave National Monument is home to a wonderful array of natural resources. Even more intriguing, the Monument provides educational experiences above and below ground. Our effort to offer on-site and off-site programs is a major step forward in making youth appreciate our nation's natural heritage." Environmental education has become an intricate part of programming for many conservation agencies. Through hands-on activities, game-like programs, and informational presentations, students gain a better understanding of the world around them.

For the general public, the Monument currently offers two Scenic Tours each day, occurring at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Scenic Tours are one hour and 20 minutes in length and take participants on a one-half mile guided hike through the cave. Discovery Tours take place at 9:05 a.m. 12:45 p.m., and 3:45 p.m. and consist of a 20-minute educational presentation inside the cave.

To reserve a school program, contact Bradley Block, Chief of Interpretation, at (605) 673-8300 and select Option 4. For additional Monument information, contact the visitor center at (605) 673-8300 and select Option 2. The Monument can also be visited online at www.nps.gov/jeca. The visitor center is open through the winter season from 8:30 a.m. -4:30 p.m. (MT).

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